**Durban III: The Good News and the Bad News**

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In the United Nations cosmos of Orwellian ventures, one of the prominent features has become the series of conferences named for an initial 2001 conclave in Durban, South Africa. That gathering was supposed to be about fighting racism. Instead, it became a debauch of anti-Semitic Israel-bashing so extreme that then-U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell ordered the U.S. delegation to walk out. That conference is now known as Durban I.

With the aim of building on the achievements of Durban I, the UN followed up in 2009 with Durban II, also known as the Durban Review Conference. That was held in Geneva, Switzerland, amid the manicured flowerbeds, peacock-bedecked lawns and BMW-filled parking lots of the UN's Palais des Nations, former home to the failed League of Nations. Durban II is most memorable for having featured, as a star speaker, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The Obama administration decided close to the last minute to boycott that conference. Ahmadinejad's speech [triggered a walkout](http://www.pjtv.com/?cmd=mpg&mpid=175&load=1753) by a host of Western delegates. Pajamas Media's Roger Simon and I had gone to Geneva to cover Durban II (we found ourselves staying in a hotel where Ahmadinejad had booked 40 rooms to accommodate his entourage) and when the conference fizzled into a gross embarrassment for the UN, thanks to Ahmadinejad's Holocaust-denying style, Roger quite [reasonably hoped](http://pjmedia.com/rogerlsimon/2009/04/21/durban-ii-diary-part-4-the-un-folds-its-cards/) that might mean an end to the Durban "process."

The UN General Assembly decided otherwise. A Durban III conference is now scheduled for Sept. 22, this time at UN headquarters, in New York, timed to coincide with the annual opening of the General Assembly. Officially, it is styled as a 10th anniversary commemoration of the original 2001 Durban I conference. That was an event so hate-filled and grotesque that one might suppose the UN would wish either to forget it, or apologize for it -- not commemorate it. But that's not how things work at the UN, where standard operating procedure of the General Assembly is that U.S. taxpayers supply the biggest share of the money, and outfits like the 57-member Organization of the Islamic Conference, or the  131 members of the so-called Group of 77 (presided over in 2009 by Sudan), decide how to spend it.

The good news is that the Obama administration has finally decided to boycott Durban III. As [UN Watch reports](http://www.facebook.com/notes/un-watch/us-pulls-out-of-uns-controversial-durban-iii-summit/10150223580899273), Senator Kirsten Gillibrand of New York led a coalition of 18 senators who months ago called on the U.S. administration to follow the lead set by Canada, and pull out. On June 1, the State Department sent Gillibrand a letter saying the U.S. "will not participate" in Durban III, and had voted against the General Assembly resolution establishing this event "because the Durban process included ugly displays of intolerance and anti-Semitism, and we did not want to see that commemorated."

The bad news is that the UN is still going ahead with Durban III. The next "consultation on the scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action" is scheduled for this Friday, at 10 A.M., in the UN's General Assembly Hall in New York. The "co-facilitators" of these consultations, the ambassadors of Monaco and Cameroon, sent a letter on May 27th to the president of the General Assembly, Switzerland's Joseph Deiss, inviting him to draw up a list of NGO representatives to attend Durban III. That's not reassuring, given Deiss's record as the General Assembly president who this past March employed the UN's General Assembly Hall as the extravagant and utterly inappropriate venue for the [U.S. premiere of a movie trashing Israel.](http://pjmedia.com/claudiarosett/israel-trashing-movie-night-at-the-un/)